

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A system for automated dissemination of presence and availability information, comprising:

a schedule publication element configured to acquire schedule information associated with at least one user;

a schedule management element configured to receive schedule information from said schedule publication element and having storage system configured to store integrated schedule information based on said received schedule information;

a schedule subscribing element configured to provide registration services whereby a subscriber registers to receive notifications regarding presence and availability information;

a schedule distribution element receptive of said integrated schedule information from said schedule management element and being responsive to said schedule subscribing element to maintain a data store identifying those subscribers who have registered to receive notifications regarding presence and availability information and to effect the dissemination of presence and availability to said subscribers.

2. The system of claim 1 wherein said system disseminates presence and availability information to an instant messaging client.

3. The system of claim 1 wherein said schedule publication element provides a human interface through which said user inputs schedule information.

4. The system of claim 1 wherein said schedule publication element is adapted to obtain schedule information from a calendar service.

5. The system of claim 1 wherein said schedule management element communicates with said schedule distribution element using a push interface whereby information retrieved from said storage system is automatically sent to said schedule distribution element.

6. The system of claim 1 wherein said schedule management element communicates with said schedule distribution element using a pull interface whereby information retrieved from said storage system is sent to said schedule distribution element at the request of said said schedule distribution element.

7. The system of claim 1 wherein said schedule distribution element controls the dissemination of presence and availability information in an open mode whereby a user's entire schedule is made available to subscribers.

8. The system of claim 7 wherein said schedule distribution element in said open mode sends updates to said subscribers whenever the user's schedule is updated by said schedule publishing element.

9. The system of claim 1 wherein said schedule distribution element controls the dissemination of presence and availability information in a sliding-window mode whereby a predefined portion of a user's schedule is made available to subscribers.

10. The system of claim 9 wherein said predefined portion is defined by a sliding window measured from the present time until a predetermined period of time thereafter.

11. The system of claim 9 wherein said predefined portion is defined by a sliding window measured from the present time and including a predetermined number of future status changes in said schedule.

12. The system of claim 9 wherein said schedule distribution element is configured to send notification to subscribers of schedule change information when said sliding window encounters status changes in the user's schedule.

13. The system of claim 1 wherein said schedule distribution element controls the dissemination of presence and availability information in an

amendment mode whereby only the changes in a predetermined portion of said schedule are disseminated.

14. The system of claim 1 wherein said schedule distribution element controls the dissemination of presence and availability information in an refreshment mode whereby all schedule information in a predetermined portion of said schedule is disseminated.

15. The system of claim 1 wherein said schedule subscribing element communicates with said schedule distribution element to negotiate whether to accept a subscription request.

16. The system of claim 15 wherein said schedule distribution element controls whether to accept a subscription request.

17. The system of claim 1 wherein said subscription request identifies preferences associated with a given subscriber that mediate how information is disseminated to that subscriber.

18. The system of claim 17 wherein said preferences are stored in said data store identifying those subscribers who have registered to receive notifications.

19. The system of claim 17 wherein said schedule distribution element is configured to selectively accept a subscription request even if the identified preferences are not met.

20. The system of claim 1 wherein at least some of said elements are interactive with one another via network communication.

21. The system of claim 1 wherein at least some of said elements are interactive with one another via programming interfaces.